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## THE VALIDITY OF NON-EPISCOPAL ORDINATION <sup>1</sup>

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CAMBRIDGE

“The fourth and last lecture,” said Judge Dudley, “I would have for the maintaining, explaining, and proving the validity of the ordination of ministers or pastors of the churches, and so their administration of the sacraments or ordinances of religion as the same hath been practised in New England, from the first beginning of it, and so continued at this day. Not that I would in any wise invalidate Episcopal Ordination, as it is commonly called and practised in the Church of England; but I do esteem the method of ordination as practised in Scotland, at Geneva, and among dissenters in England, and in the churches in this country, to be very safe, Scriptural, and valid; and that the great Head of the Church, by his blessed spirit, hath owned, sanctified, and blessed them accordingly, and will continue to do so to the end of the World. Amen.”

### I

The reluctance of good Churchmen to acknowledge the validity of non-Episcopal orders is due in part to a confusion of inspiration with direction.

<sup>1</sup>The Dudleian Lecture at Harvard University, April 8, 1919. This was one of the last public utterances of the late Dean Hodges. He died May 27, 1919.

There are two theories concerning the making of the church, as there are two theories concerning the making of the world. According to one theory the church was made by special creation, that is, by the personal and definite direction of Jesus Christ. According to the other theory the church was made by processes of evolution; it came into being not like a house but like a tree. A house begins with plans and specifications, and is erected from the first stone of the cellar to the last shingle of the roof in conformity with these prearranged details. But a tree grows. It begins with the mysterious presence of life in a seed, and is shaped thereafter by manifold conditions of sun and rain, of light and shade, of soil and changing seasons. Thus Christ planted his gospel in the souls of men, and it grew into the church. He contributed the initial inspiration of his personality and his message, and the men whom he inspired did the rest; assisted indeed by reference to him and by prayer, but meeting each new situation according to their best judgment, assuring themselves as well as they could of his approval.

A right choice between these theories depends on the New Testament facts. In favor of the direction-theory is the fact that the apostles, up to the end of the Gospels, appear to be dependent persons, without originality or initiative, doing as their Master bade them. He sent them out on experimental missions, the details of which he carefully arranged, even to the provision of the coats upon their backs and the shoes upon their feet. May we not fairly infer that he used a like care regarding that supreme mission for which his whole intercourse with them was a preparation, in furtherance of which they established the church? Was it not with these matters that he was occupied after his resurrection, when, as we are told, he spent forty days with the apostles, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"? Is it

not likely that he instructed them regarding the number and nature of the sacraments, perhaps regarding the ritual of the services, and certainly concerning the orders of the ministry and the transmission of grace by an apostolic succession?

On the other hand, against the direction-theory and in favor of the inspiration-theory, is the fact that the apostles in the beginning of the Acts have no church-ideas. It is true that they baptize; but so did John the Baptist, who was not only no churchman but can hardly be called a Christian. St. Paul, who was not usually austere in matters ecclesiastical, took the disciples of John and rebaptized them, making them begin over again at the beginning. It is true that the apostles observe the feast of the breaking of the bread; but this was a common Jewish custom, kept every week in every devout Jewish household on the eve of the Sabbath. It is true that these baptized persons who are described as breaking bread from house to house are already called "the church": "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." But the word *ecclesia*, which occurs only two times in the Gospels, and both of those times in St. Matthew, may mean there and here only a fraternity or community within the Jewish Church. There is nothing to show that the addition of these disciples to "the church" differed in any material way from the enlistment of mediæval men and women in the Order of St. Francis. On the contrary, the whole situation implies that such an act as a separation from the ancient church and an erection of an independent church apart from the Aaronic succession, had no place whatever in the apostolic mind. The idea that the apostles and their followers proceeded naturally and immediately into schism, and lightly went out of the church whose foundations were in the Holy Scripture, and apart from which, according to common belief, there was no salvation, may

be held indeed by dissenters to whom the church is of no great importance, but every good Churchman knows better. The Christians of the Day of Pentecost had no more intention of founding a church, in our sense of that word, than the disciples of St. Francis. They hoped to convert their brethren in the church to their own faith in Jesus as the Messiah, but this they would do from within, not from without. Whatever their Master said to them in the forty days during which he instructed them in the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, there is nothing in their behavior to indicate that he said a word about the founding of a Christian Church. They continued in the ancient church till they were driven out. If they had emblazoned a coat-of-arms for the Christian family, they would have drawn a cross upon the shield, but beside the cross, as a further indication of the circumstances of their origin, they would have shown the stones which were hurled at their first martyr, Stephen. They began to be a Christian Church to their amazement, without expectation, without preparation or direction.

What they had was inspiration. St. Paul expresses it when having declared his mind concerning a debated matter (1 Cor. 7 40) he says, This is "after my judgment, and I think also that I have the Spirit of God." The apostles proceeded according to their own judgment, guided by their remembrance of the teaching and example of Jesus. They thought that they had the Spirit of God.

St. Peter, however, in his vision on the housetop, had forgotten the example and teaching of Jesus, and was lacking in the Spirit of God when, being told to disregard the old ceremonial distinction between kinds of food, he said, "Not so, Lord." Jesus had disregarded that distinction. "Not that which goeth into the mouth," he said, "defileth a man." Having so said he departed into

the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon, for with that declaration his ministry in Galilee was ended. The conservative souls of the scribes and Pharisees were so outraged by this defiance of church tradition that he had to go away to save his life. He had disobeyed not the church only but the Bible (Leviticus 11). From that moment the way was all down-hill, from the heights of popularity to the valley of the shadow of death. But this was so imperfectly understood by St. Peter that the vision on the housetop found him in agreement with the scribes and Pharisees. Even to a voice from heaven, he stoutly replied, "Not so, Lord!"

Accordingly, the apostles proceeded in the ordering of the Christian society, assisted indeed by inspiration, by the example of Jesus and the Spirit of God, but not compelled thereby. For the most part they went right, but sometimes, as in the case of St. Peter, they turned their faces, for the moment, in the wrong direction.

The first thing which they did was to elect an apostle in the place of Judas. If their intention was to restore the number twelve, they were probably thinking in terms of Judaism; they were commending the Christian society to their brethren in the Jewish Church by a loyal recognition of the twelve tribes. This initial act of ecclesiastical organization had no permanent effect. The apostle Matthias had not previously appeared in the records of the Christian discipleship, and he is not heard of afterwards; neither are the Twelve heard of long. It seemed, indeed, for the moment as if the new fraternity was to be controlled by an executive committee of Twelve Apostles, perhaps under the presidency of Peter. But this experiment, if such it was, did not succeed. After a little, the Twelve fall out of sight, and the book called the Acts of the Apostles is found to record the acts of only two apostles — St. Peter, with whom appears St. John as a silent shadow, and St. Paul, who

claimed complete independence of any election or appointment.

The next thing which the Christians did in connection with the ministry was to set apart seven men to care for the poor.

That they did this by the Spirit of God appears in the fact that the division of labor thus effected proved to be for the general good not only immediately but permanently. Whether these seven may properly be called deacons is debated, but it is sufficiently plain that from that day forth the officer who administered the spiritualities had by his side an officer who administered the temporalities. This distinction of duties was not very clearly maintained, even at the beginning. The two deacons about whom we have any account, St. Stephen and St. Philip, distinguished themselves not by their activity in serving tables but by preaching the gospel, that is, by that "ministry of the word" which the apostles had intended to reserve for themselves. But in general the difference of function has continued to this day both within and without the episcopally ordered churches.

It is evident, however, that the work of the Spirit of God in the matter was not to give the apostles an accurate memory of instructions which they had received, but to give them a right judgment in meeting an unexpected need. They were inspired, but not directed. It is inconceivable that our Lord said to the apostles, as he spoke of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, "It shall presently come to pass that you will neglect the Grecian widows in the daily ministration; when that happens look out seven men of honest report whom you may appoint over that business." This would have been like encouraging a disease in order to provide an excellent remedy. The apostles ordained the deacons, and in so doing took the first step toward the abiding organization of the Christian Church, under the impulsion of a local

and immediate situation. They said to themselves, Here are new conditions, what now shall we do? And they proceeded to act after their own judgment, thinking also that they had the Spirit of God. In so doing they set a precedent which was followed when to the order of deacons was added the order of bishops, and when upon the order of bishops was superimposed the order of patriarchs or popes. The same precedent was followed when the church in England subtracted the pope, and the church in Germany subtracted the bishops.

This determination of ecclesiastical procedure not by tradition but by the revelation of the Spirit of God in new conditions appears in dramatic form in the apostolic conference in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas, returning from their mission in Galatia, report an unprecedented situation. "The Gentiles," they say, "are receptive to the preaching of the gospel, and are applying in great numbers to be admitted to the Christian society. What shall we do?" For up to that moment nobody had become a Christian without having been first a Jew. Such was the necessary order so long as the Christian Church continued to be a Jewish society. One must be a Jew first; as, in order to become a Franciscan or a Dominican one must first be a Catholic Christian. Thus the question of the independence of the Christian Church came up for discussion.

Against such independence stood the fact of the ancient church. There was the Church, established not only in the immemorial history of the people, but in the pages of the Bible. It was there recorded how the church was not only founded but organized by God Himself. He had appointed its sacrifices and services, even in detail; He had blessed its ministry in succession from Aaron; and He had so concerned Himself with the regulation of its life that there were those who said, "Except ye keep the Law of Moses, which God taught him, ye



cannot be saved." All the associations, all the arguments, all the convictions which addressed the consciences of men in the Middle Ages who considered the possibility not of departing from the church but of disobeying the least of its commandments, were arrayed against the men who suggested that Gentiles might be saved without any allegiance to the Aaronic succession or any reference to the book of Leviticus. The idea that the Christian society could be part Jew and part Gentile was to them like the idea that the American Republic could be part free and part slave. It seemed impossible. Indeed, it proved to be impossible; the Gentiles eventually crowded out the Jews. That, however, was not foreseen by the Jewish Christians who met in Conference at Jerusalem. Neither did they foresee with clearness that their action involved the dependence or independence of the Christian Church, for many of them continued to be good Jews, obedient to the Law of Moses, to their life's end. The conservatives, however, suspected such a result sufficiently to make them natural opponents.

On the other hand, in favor of independence was the testimony of Paul and Barnabas, confirmed, in the course of the discussion, by the experience of Peter, to the effect that there was a revelation of the will of God in the present which amended and corrected and superseded the revelations of the will of God in the past. No matter how stoutly one might affirm that salvation and the Law were bound up together, and that grace could not be had outside the church, Paul and Barnabas and Peter declared that they had seen with their own eyes the unmistakable manifestation of the grace of God outside the church. "God," they said, "has borne the Gentiles witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them." The result was that the conference at Jerusalem formally

resolved to do that which both the Bible and the Church forbade. Against all texts and canons, the plain word of the Bible and the undoubted custom of the Church, they set the revelation of God in the new conditions, which must be encountered with new methods.

When they put in writing the resolutions which they had adopted, freeing the Gentile members of their fraternity from the yoke of the Mosaic Law, they used a phrase which is the true formula of all independence. "It seemed good," they said, "to the Holy Ghost, and to us." Thus they declared the principle upon which they acted. They set forth the proposition that new times make new duties, and that all allegiance to the past is properly subject to our allegiance to the present. The supreme thing, they said, is not what was done in the old time, even though it be maintained by the Bible and the Church, but what is to be done in this new time in which we live, under these new conditions, in new ways, as it may seem good to the Holy Ghost and to us.

In this radical and revolutionary spirit the Christian Church began as an independent organization. That which was born on the Day of Pentecost was a Christian Society within the Jewish Church; that which was born at this Conference in Jerusalem was the Christian Church itself. It had already been recognized by clear-sighted Jews as a heresy; it was now perceived to be a schism. To such consistent Churchmen, who hold all heresy to be an offence against the truth of God, and all schism an offence against the established order of God, the Pope of Rome himself is no better than a dissenting minister.

From that day forward the most conspicuous fact in the New Testament is the ministry of St. Paul. It was independent not only of the Law of Moses but of the authority of the apostles. St. Paul was "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father." His call came straight from the sky,

and he had no other ordination than that which such a call conferred. The matter was much debated, and he was careful to make his position plain. The question was as to the necessity of apostolic ordination. The conservative brethren informed the Galatians that Paul had no ecclesiastical standing, because he had not been appointed by the apostles; he was not in the apostolic succession. Paul, writing to the Galatians, not only confesses the fact but glories in it. His ministry is dependent on no man. When I was converted, he says, and commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ, I went on to Damascus, and thence to Arabia. I conferred not with flesh and blood. It was three years before I even saw an apostle. Then I spent only fifteen days in Jerusalem, and met Peter and James, the Lord's brother, and thereafter went immediately into a ministry of a dozen years in Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea. On my return I visited Jerusalem and conversed with "those who seemed to be somewhat," and those who seemed to be somewhat, as for example, James, Peter, and John, added nothing to me. They contributed neither instruction nor authority, only they gave to Barnabas and me the right hands of fellowship and said, Go on with your good work among the Gentiles.

Many of the conservative brethren disapproved of this arrangement, and did their best to hinder and discredit the ministry of St. Paul. The true mind of the church, however, found expression in the giving of the right hand of fellowship, which meant that difference need not result in division. Thenceforth the Jewish part of the church, continuing in the old ways, under the leadership of apostles, and the Gentile part of the church, departing from the old ways and going in new directions, under the leadership of men who though they were called apostles were independent of the Twelve, lived side by side, with

occasional disagreements and misunderstandings but as brethren in one united church. It was a brotherly covenant between those who stood, in later phrase, for the old learning and those who stood for the new; as we should say, between Catholics and Protestants, between those whose ministry derived its authority from the apostles, and those whose ministry derived its authority from the immediate call of God.

The references to the ministry in the New Testament confirm the impression that organization is still subject to experiment; they are in accord with the theory that the common expectation of the speedy end of the world made all such matters unimportant. So long as that expectation continued, there was no thought of laying permanent foundations or of making arrangements for a long future. It was sufficient to meet the present local need. St. Paul in Galatia, for the confirming of the souls of the disciples, ordains them elders in every church. And so elsewhere. Accordingly these churches knew two kinds of ministers, local and general. The local ministers were the elders and deacons; the general minister was the missionary by whom they had been converted. The local ministry was relatively insignificant. St. Paul writes to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, addressing himself directly to the brethren, making no mention of the elders. Writing to the Philippians, he invokes the grace of God upon all the saints, and also upon the bishops and deacons. But neither bishops nor deacons appear under these titles in the list which he gives in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (12 28). "God," he says, "hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." The local officers — the deacons, and the elders, also called presbyters, also called bishops

— appear here only towards the end in the terms “helps” and “governments.” In the list in Ephesians (4 11) — “he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” — they do not appear at all, unless as “pastors.” The Christians are so few that the missionary goes about on circuit among his missions, performing all the necessary spiritual offices, and needing little assistance from those whom he has appointed over the local communities.

These various records of the proceedings of the apostolic church show plainly that the ordering of the ministry was determined by experiment. The primitive Christians had no directions derived in detail from Jesus Christ; what they had was inspiration, by which we mean that guidance into truth and right which God gave then, and still gives, to those who honestly desire to do His will. The inference is that if experiment was a valid process in the first century, it was valid in the sixteenth, and is still valid in the twentieth. No ordering of the ministry is sacrosanct; neither the papal order, with its many ministers; nor the episcopal order, with its three kinds — bishops, priests, and deacons; nor the presbyterian order, with presbyters and deacons; nor the congregational order, with independent presbyters; nor the Quaker order, with no minister at all. These all arose from endeavors to meet what seemed an imperative need, following the precedent of the invention of deacons by the Twelve. Some of the experiments succeeded well, some not so well; thereby was manifested the divine approval or disapproval. Sometimes an experiment succeeded for a time, and was then thought to be a mistake, a hindrance rather than a help; so some felt, wisely or unwisely, about the papacy or episcopacy. The resulting change has its precedent in the tentative conditions out of which every detail of the ministry came. It is to be tested not by its conformity to any

divine direction, but by such conformity alike to the will of God and to the needs of man as appears in its spiritual success.

## II

The hesitation of good Churchmen to acknowledge the validity of non-Episcopal orders is due not only to a confusion of inspiration with direction, but also to a confusion of validity with regularity.

As the church passed out of the first century into the second, several conditions emphasized the importance of regularity. Naturally and inevitably the first fine freedom of enthusiasm sobered into organization. It was perceived that the end of the world was not so near as had been believed, and it was necessary to make arrangements for the future. A continual increase in the number of Christians called for a conduct of services and a distribution of ministerial duties such as had not been needed in the little domestic groups which constituted so many of the early churches.

Accordingly a change took place in the position of the local ministry. The three orders to which St. Paul had given prominence — “first apostles, secondarily prophets; thirdly teachers” — had been for the most part itinerant, a ministry at large. The subsequent association of teachers with pastors — “pastors and teachers” — may mean that these were the first to settle and become a part of the local organization. There were also local prophets, as appears in the liturgical confusion at Corinth; but in the second-century document called *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* the prophets are wandering preachers who are beginning to be in disfavor. Some of them have so imposed upon the hospitable brethren that it has become necessary to rule that no prophet shall remain in a parish more than one day, or

two at the most; "If he remain three days, he is a false prophet." Gradually, in spite of efforts to retain and revive it, the order of prophets ceased. As for the apostles, though the title had been extended beyond the first Twelve, they came to the end of their days and died. Thus the local ministers came into a place of new importance.

The apostles and prophets and teachers had been charged with the ministry of religion, in distinction from the presbyters (or bishops) and deacons who had been charged with the ministry of discipline and the care of the poor. That the distinctions were loosely drawn appears, indeed, in the case of Stephen, who went beyond his duties as a deacon to act as prophet or teacher, and in the case of Philip, who exceeded his duties as a deacon to carry the gospel into Samaria like an apostle; every man did what he could, without any strict regard to official limitations. In general, however, the presbyters ruled and the deacons served; having, as we should say, lay rather than clerical duties. They were wardens and vestrymen rather than what we call ministers; thus following the pattern of the synagogue, in which so many of them had been brought up, whose officers were all laymen. The synagogue differed from the temple both in the character of its services and in the ecclesiastical standing of its officers, as the Young Men's Christian Association differs from the Church.

Of course, the presbyters and deacons were engaged in the extension of the Christian religion. Everything that they did was religious, and was in the spirit of the fervent enthusiasm of the time. Whatever their office, they praised and prayed and preached as they were able. But so did all the congregation. The presbyters and deacons baptized, but any Christian might baptize. If they had any special places at the Lord's Supper, the fact does not appear in St. Paul's admonitions to the Corin-

thians, which are addressed to the congregation without reference to the clergy. The Corinthian services, as he describes them, were curiously congregational and non-clerical. Everybody had a psalm, a doctrine, a tongue, a revelation, or an interpretation. The best that could be done in the way of order was to suggest that not more than three members of the congregation should speak at the same time. The local parish was like a frontier mission of zealous people, carrying on their own services, managing their affairs by an executive committee (the presbyters and deacons) and visited at long intervals by a minister (an apostle or a prophet) when one was able in his wide circuit to get to that neighborhood. When the ministry at large ceased and the prophets and apostles came no more, it was necessary to make new arrangements.

One of these new arrangements appears in the office of the presbyter-president. The presbyter in some places had been appointed by apostles, as St. Paul ordained elders in Galatia. More often, the apostles being few, and the churches many and widely scattered, the presbyters were chosen by the congregation, as in Rome, where there were elders before the visit of any apostle. At first for administrative convenience, then for religious direction and order, one presbyter presided over the group of presbyters. Justin Martyr calls him the president. His position, as he appears in the Apology, at the head of the table at the Lord's Supper, suggests one of the ways in which he was naturally distinguished from his brethren. In the nature of things, the Corinthian disorder at the services and the sacraments became intolerable. It was stopped by the election of a presiding officer. The ceasing of the visits of apostles, and the consequent independence of the local parish, increased his responsibilities. The nature of his office was indicated by his title; he was called bishop.



The presbyters had been called bishops from the beginning. St. Paul having summoned the presbyters of Ephesus (the word in our translation is "elders") exhorts them to take heed to themselves and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made them bishops (*ἐπισκόπους*, "overseers"). As the presbyter-president came to be distinguished from his brethren, the title of bishop was naturally appropriated to him, signifying his function of oversight. Naturally also, by processes of human nature rather than by any formal action, his influence and authority increased. He was the head of the local church.

It is in this capacity, as a parochial bishop, that he appears in the letters of Ignatius. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, being carried across Asia Minor on his way to martyrdom at Rome, writes letters of greeting and farewell and counsel to the churches of the chief cities. He admonishes them concerning the evil of division, against which he exalts the office of the bishop. "Do nothing," he says, "apart from the bishop." "He who does anything apart from the bishop serves the devil." Obedience to the bishop is obedience to God. "We ought to regard the bishop as the Lord himself." "Reverence the bishop as Jesus Christ, and the presbyters as the assembly of the apostles."

This teaching, as Jerome afterwards reminded the bishops of his time, had no standing in the word of the Lord or of the apostles. "With the ancients," he says, "presbyters were the same as bishops; but gradually all the responsibility was deferred to a single person, that the thickets of heresy might be rooted out. Therefore as presbyters know that by the custom of the church they are subject to him who shall have been set over them, so let bishops be also aware that they are superior to presbyters more owing to custom than to any actual ordinance of the Lord." Indeed, the Ignatian epistles

themselves show plainly that the interest of Ignatius was not so much in the doctrine of the ministry as in the peace of the local parish. In the peril of heresy and schism he found safety in allegiance to the bishop. But the bishop is what we should call the rector of the parish. He is the minister of the local church. He is a parochial bishop; his diocese is the city where he lives. He differs little from the pastors of Puritan churches in colonial New England. Samuel Spaulding of Northampton, whom the discerning Indians called "the Englishmen's God," was a parochial bishop. So were the divines whom Cotton Mather celebrated in the *Magnalia*.

Even so, there were those who protested against any exaltation of one brother above another. The Montanists objected to the rubrics which gave to a master of the assembly the right to limit the primitive liberty of speech and action in the conduct of the service. They claimed the right to interrupt. They wished to speak with tongues and prophesy, and to behave themselves as their brethren had done in the good old times in Corinth. As for the new clerical distinctions by which they found themselves restrained, they resented and refused them. The novel arrangements of precedence and function, according to which one was a bishop and others were presbyters and deacons, they opposed. They recognized no distinctions between ministers and laymen. "Are not we laymen priests," they said, "as well as you?"

In spite of these objections the evolution of the ministry continued. As the Christians increased in number, and there were churches not only in the cities but in the neighboring towns, the parish with the bishop for its rector and the presbyters for curates no longer met the needs of the situation. The presbyters were sent out from the cities to be the ministers of town parishes. Under these circumstances, various rights and duties

which had previously belonged to the bishop alone were now given to the presbyters. At the same time certain exceptions were made whereby the presbyters were kept in dependence. They were prevented from becoming parochial bishops. One of the privileges thus withheld was the laying on of hands in confirmation. This completion of the service of baptism was reserved for the bishop. Another withheld privilege was the laying on of hands in ordination. A bishop indeed might not admit to the order of presbyters without the coöperation of the presbyters; they must lay on their hands with his; but no assembly of presbyters might ordain without the bishop. Thus a part was reserved for the bishop in the office of baptism, whereby admission was given to the membership of the church, and in the office of ordination, whereby admission was given to the church's ministry. Along with these reservations went a natural oversight of the dependent presbyters and their parishes. The effect was to widen the bishop's responsibility and authority. He became a diocesan bishop.

Meanwhile the importance of the bishop was magnified by the use which was made of him in the argument against heresy. The Gnostics, who held that matter is essentially evil, and who therefore denied that God made the world (how could the good God make the bad world?) and denied also that God became incarnate (how could God take our evil flesh upon him?), claimed that their heresy was the true doctrine of the apostles. They based their claim upon a tradition which, they said, had been handed down from apostolic times. They declared that the apostles had taught the Gnostic creed to such as were able to receive it, and that those favored disciples (Gnostics, men who know) had instructed their disciples, and so on.

For such assertions Irenæus (*c.* 150 A.D.) found a determining test in the apostolic succession. The true

doctrine of the apostles, he maintained, is that which the apostles themselves committed to those whom they put in charge of the churches which they founded. This doctrine these men handed down in their turn to their successors. They can tell us whether or not the apostles taught this or that. Here, let us say, is Valentinus teaching Gnosticism in Rome, and claiming to have a secret tradition derived from the apostles. We will confute Valentinus by referring the matter to the bishop. Tell us, Bishop Pius, how this doctrine agrees with the faith as it was communicated to you by your predecessor Hyginus, who received it from his predecessor Telesphorus, and he from Sixtus, and he from Alexander, and so from Evaristus, and Clement II, and Anacletus, and Linus, and Clement I (many names for a hundred years, but most of them martyred), and Clement from St. Peter and St. Paul. Pius answers thus and so, and we perceive that the claim of Valentinus will not stand. The decisive evidence is that of the successor of the apostles.

The effect of this method with heretics was to magnify the office of the bishop. He was thus related not only to the administration of his diocese but to the Christian faith. It was highly important that his election and consecration should be so carefully ordered as to make his succession from the apostles plain. His episcopal genealogy must be without interruption or defect. To guard against the possibility of failure in a single line every bishop must have the hands of at least three bishops laid upon him, thus making the succession not a line but a network of lines. This arrangement discredited any bishop who had come into his place some other way. The disaffection which had led brethren to separate from the bishop of the apostolic succession and appoint another might have been so justifiable that all the right and all the truth were on their side, and the new bishop who lacked the sanction of the succession might have all the other

virtues of the blessed saints, nevertheless he was incapacitated for the necessary work of bearing witness to ancient custom against modern innovation, and to apostolic truth against the falsehoods of heresy. He was denied a place among the custodians of the faith.

The Gnostic heresy went where all the good heresies go: what was true in it became orthodoxy, and what was false was more or less forgotten. The books of the New Testament took the place of the tradition of the apostolically descended bishops. There was no further use for the apostolic succession in the transmission of truth. It was continued in service for the transmission of grace.

The Christians had long differed from their neighbors in the directness of their approach to God. In the Greek and Roman world in which they lived religion was defined in terms of priesthood, and this was also the language of the sacred books which Christianity had inherited from Judaism. Between man and God, offering the prayers and praises of the people and bringing down pardon and help and blessing from on high, were mediating priests. The synagogue, maintained without the presence of priests, had taught a new way in religion, and upon this the Christians had so far improved that they were commonly accused of atheism. They differed from all their neighbors not only in having no statues or symbols of the gods, but in having no altars or sacrifices. As for priests, they were all priests, they said.

It is very difficult, however, to resist the influence of a general idea. Naturally, perhaps inevitably, the Christians used the metaphors of sacerdotal religion. Even in the New Testament, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews deals with Judaism not like St. Paul, in the spirit of uncompromising contention, but in the spirit of conciliation: Christianity is not so much an opponent of Judaism as a fulfilment, a substantial fulfilment of old prophecies and symbols and sacrifices. We too, he says,

have an altar. Even Tertullian, asserting the Montanist position that there is no essential difference between the clergy and the laity, uses the title "priests": Are not we laymen priests as well as you? Thus far, there is no sacerdotal meaning. In the Christian religion there is only one priest — our great High Priest who has ascended into the heavens — by whom every humblest layman may come boldly unto the throne of grace and obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Gradually, however, the sacerdotal words are applied to the work of the ministry. In the middle of the third century, in the time of Cyprian, although the presbyters are not yet called priests, that title is given to the bishop. He stands at the Lord's Table as at an altar, and offers not only the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving but, as Cyprian says, the sacrifice of the Lord's Passion.

The function of a priesthood, the purpose of a sacrifice, is to gain the grace of God. The priest is endeavoring to secure for us the favor of God. He is doing for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. He is an essential factor in our salvation. But he must be a true priest, duly qualified to mediate between us and God. As schisms increase, and rival claims are made by bishops against bishops and presbyters against presbyters, and now this company and now that declares itself the true church, where shall we find solution and assurance? Cyprian said, In the apostolic succession.

Up to that time the man who was in the succession might say to his dissenting neighbor, Your ministry is irregular. Cyprian taught him to say, Your ministry is invalid.

The test of regularity is accordance with the laws and customs. A regular ministry is that which has proceeded along the accepted lines of development, being loyal to the presbyter-president, and then to the parochial bishop, and then to the diocesan bishop, as these officers appear

and prevail. When presently, against the protests of Cyprian, the diocesan bishops are subordinated to a patriarchal bishop or pope, the regular ministry conforms to this development.

An irregular ministry proceeds along a line of its own. In the time of the presbyter-president it refuses to acknowledge a distinction between the clergy and the laity. In the time of the parochial bishop, and then of the diocesan bishop, it reserves the right to disagree with him. It stands for free thinking and free speaking, and for the independence of the local congregation. It maintains the religion of the spirit over against the religion of authority.

Such an irregular ministry is reprobated by ecclesiastics. The effect of it has often been to weaken the church in its contention with the evil of the world. It has been the resort of narrow individualists, of eccentrics, of rebellious, factious, and sectarian spirits, impatient of the restraints of order. On the other hand, it has often raised a needed protest against superstition, ambition, and despotism in the church. Thus it corresponds with revolution in the state: sometimes unwise and productive only of disorder and reaction; sometimes unsuccessful though provoked by intolerable wrongs; but sometimes a means of setting forward the progress of liberty and justice. From the point of view of the British monarchy, especially as it is represented by the doctrine of the divine right of kings, the American Republic is an irregular government. So is the method of ordination irregular "as practised in Scotland, at Geneva, and among dissenters in England and in the churches in this country." So also is Episcopal ordination irregular from the point of view of the patriarchal bishop of the West, the Pope of Rome.

Cyprian took the exceedingly important step of declaring that these irregular ministries are invalid. They are

not only disturbing and inconvenient and a hindrance to ecclesiastical administration, but they have no spiritual standing. They are null and void. He declared that outside the church there is no salvation. "He cannot have God for his Father who has not the church for his mother. If he could escape who was outside the ark, he too will escape who is abroad and outside the church." Thus he claimed for the church a monopoly of grace. This he did not as a new revealer of the mind of God but rather as the spokesman of the contemporary situation. As a Roman lawyer, acquainted with the processes of Roman order and Roman methods of transmitting power, this, he felt, was what the Christian society needed. This, he said, is how God deals with man.

Thus Cyprian introduced a new definition of the church. Nothing so revolutionary had been proposed since the original declaration of independence in the conference at Jerusalem. Nothing so revolutionary was said again till the Reformation. Cyprian's doctrine of grace determined the character of that aspect of Christianity which is called Catholicism, as Luther's doctrine of grace determined the character of that aspect of Christianity which is called Protestantism. Cyprian and Luther agreed that divine grace is essential to salvation. Luther said that it can be had by the direct appeal of any man to God. Cyprian said that it can be had only in the church, and he defined the church as identified and bounded by the apostolic succession.

The difficulty with Cyprian's doctrine is that it has no standing in revelation, in reason, or in experience. It is not derived from the New Testament, which is a protest against a monopoly of grace. It is not supported by reason, which finds nothing but futility in the claim of any organization to limit by its by-laws the dispensation of the grace of God. It is not supported by experience,



which testifies, on the contrary, that there is at least as much of the grace of God outside the apostolic succession as there is inside. The test of regularity is the canon law, but the test of validity is the blessing of God. It is in vain that irregular ministries are pronounced invalid; for they who exercise them and they who benefit by them know by their own experience that they have the divine acceptance and benediction.

Happily, the Church of England has made no such pronouncement. There are individual Churchmen, indeed, who have maintained in sermons and in printed books that outside of the apostolic succession there is no assurance of salvation. But there are individual Churchmen who have maintained other impossible doctrines. Statements such as these are of the nature of private opinion. The official statement is in the preface to the Ordinal: "It is evident unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been three Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church — Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which Offices were evermore had in such reverend estimation that no man might presume to execute any of them except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by public Prayer, with Imposition of Hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful Authority. And therefore, to the intent that these Orders may be continued, and reverently used and esteemed in this Church, no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in this Church, or suffered to execute said Functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereto, according to the Form hereafter following, or hath had Episcopal Consecration or Ordination." The application of this statement is indicated in the phrase "this Church." Nothing is said concerning the ministry of other churches.

The Twenty-third Article of Religion, entitled "Of Ministry in the Congregation," reads: "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the Congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the Congregation to call and send Ministers into the Lord's vineyard." These sentences are plainly Protestant. Any Methodist or Presbyterian or Congregationalist would say the same. The intention is to secure a selected and instructed ministry and to maintain order.

Except in the invocation of one prayer, in the American office of Institution of Ministers, the apostolic succession is not mentioned in the formularies of the church. The threefold ministry, beginning in primitive Christianity and continued through the subsequent centuries by Episcopal ordination, is held in reverent esteem, and is required in the Episcopal Church, in England and in America. It is the standard of regularity in "this Church." But in the preface to the American revision of the Book of Common Prayer, where it is said that by the gaining of our political independence "the different denominations of Christians in these States were left at full and equal liberty to model and organize their respective Churches, and forms of worship, and discipline, in such manner as they might judge most convenient for their future prosperity," there is no suggestion that by the exercise of this liberty these Christians may be imperiling the salvation of their souls.

The difference between Episcopal and non-Episcopal ordination is not in the matter of validity; for the test of validity is acceptance with God, who blesses these ministries alike, and gives His grace as abundantly by the sacraments of the one as by the sacraments of the

other. The difference is in the matter of regularity, according to the standards of the canon law. It is a minor difference, but yet important because it has to do with the better union of the churches.

The historic episcopate connects the Christians who possess it with the ancient churches of the East and of the West, and is thereby a factor in that larger unity which, however remote from present realization, ought not to be left out of our ideals; there can be no reunion of Christendom without it.

It has also a nearer value by its relation to the contemporary problem of ecclesiastical division. To this difficulty it brings a solution. There are differences within the Episcopal Church which are nearly as great as the differences without. High Churchmen, Low Churchmen, and Broad Churchmen are almost as diverse the one from the other as Roman Catholics, Methodists, and Congregationalists. They are held together by their common allegiance to their father in God, the bishop. It is like the inclusion of various tastes, temperaments, manners, and convictions in a family. It is proved by actual experience that most of the types of religion which now separate people into divided denominations can live together in a reasonable measure of peace and maintain the principles for which they stand, under the conditions of a constitutional episcopacy. It is as democratic and as comprehensive as the administration of the United States.

Meanwhile, as regards those who prefer some other way, we may well agree with Judge Dudley, that "the great Head of the Church, by his blessed Spirit, hath owned, sanctified, and blessed them." Dudley believed that God would "continue to do so to the end of the World"; but we may hope that our divisions will not last that long.